

news

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THE CANTERBURY SOCIETY OF ARTS
CNR DURHAM AND ARMAGH STREETS
P.O. BOX 772
CHRISTCHURCH
TELEPHONE 67-261



"Mt Madaline and Mt Tutoko", in our South Westland, a painting by Douglas Badcock, and here seen hanging in the Canberra office of the Prime Minister of Australia (Mr Harold Holt).

AT THE TOP

Our plastic arts are making their way in our trading with Australia, and at the very top level too.

Gracing the office of the Australian Prime Minister (Mr Harold Holt) in Parliament Buildings, Canberra, is a fine representational oil by Douglas Badcock, of Queenstown.

Mr Holt bought this while in Queenstown, during his last visit to New Zealand.

The painting is entitled "Mt Madaline and Mt Tutoko", and the scene is very strongly characteristic of our South Westland country. It is 32in by 23in.

In Mr Holt's office it has pride of place, on the wall opposite his desk so he must see it every time he looks up.

The painting must stand out boldly for the office walls are panelled in Australian Blackwood, and the carpet is a dark mushroom colour.

Since the office is especially lighted for television, and is often the "set" for interviews, Mr Badcock can probably fairly boast a very extensive "public".

Other paintings in the room are a large oil, "Murumbidgee River" in traditional style by J. R. Jackson; a small oil by Tom Roberts; and a water-colour by Max Angus.

Members who may be wondering have the President (Mr Stewart Mair) to thank for information and photograph. Mr Mair, visiting Canberra, arranged with Mr Holt's Press Secretary to inspect the painting in Mr Holt's office and to have it photographed for the News.

LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

It has been very difficult for me to find time to sit down and try to collect my thoughts on the events of the past few days here in Sydney and now in Melbourne. The inevitable touring of the small dealer galleries has been full of surprises and the art market in both Melbourne and Sydney seems to be as difficult to break into as it is in most big cities. The Barry Stern Gallery made a sale worth \$A30,000 recently for an undisclosed artist's work and they seemed to be very pleased with a new show of paintings by William Peascot, an English painter who works in a highly sophisticated relief style of painting. Often the sales are to American collectors who have business interests here. Of course the galleries have a wide range of works in stock to view . . . however the quality often falls well below the standards we would expect to find at home. Many Australian painters seem content to "pump out" the same old works that have the characteristic highly finished and heavily worked surface that we associate with their particular vision. I could be rushing in to a false conclusion, but when you

fight your way through the impasto or crumbling texture of a typical work, the 'idea' or 'content' of the painting is quite often weak or in some cases, non-existent. I've been surprised to see as many very small works in the galleries . . . but then the prices of an important work are more than treble those at home!

Originally I had planned to visit Melbourne first but the opportunity to see the "Two Decades of American Painting" Exhibition at the Art Gallery of N.S.W. in Sydney seemed too good to miss. Stewart Mair had informed me of the closing dates and I had changed my bookings accordingly. Unhappily for me these turned out to be changed (the whole showing had been very rushed and the exhibition dates were changed three times by the organisers) . . . I could not alter my bookings again; half the population of New Zealand seemed to be emigrating to supposedly more bountiful shores. However I lost no time in racing to the art gallery, luggage and all and to my relief found some of the paintings still hung and the remaining works placed at floor level in much the same way that we are used to viewing at the local city art gallery. My luck had held as a customs official had failed to arrive in time to see that only the paintings were packed . . . as one gallery official remarked, "you could send a football team off to the "States" in one of the smaller crates and still find room for the paintings!" Most of the works were vast in size and had a surprising impact on a viewer. Daniel Thomas, the gallery curator wrote in a full page news spread that "not even the American public had been fortunate enough to see such an impressive and wide ranging exhibition" and he pointed out that the 170,000 dollar insurance cover barely managed to fully insure the works at true market price. The Exhibition had been arranged by the Museum of Modern Art, N.Y., and came from many private and gallery collections. Phillip Trustum and I worked our way through the entire collection the next day, and he said that he had only seen the works under trying conditions because over 160,000 people passed through the gallery to view not only the paintings but a fine collection of Rodin bronzes (this latter show is to be seen in N.Z.) that had been planned for a later period.

The impact on the public was quite incredible and many critics have forecast that the effect of the exhibition will have a far reaching influence on Australian art in the future. The painters I have talked to seemed to accept this point of view and although there have been painters working along similar lines here, they all appear to reflect a kind of second-hand glossy print look in their work. Seeing a vast Nolan or Elsworth Kelly is a nerve shattering experience. The areas of unprimed and sometimes stained canvas are wonderfully controlled in their works. Phillip Trustum enjoyed the work of Gorky, but I found that Lichenstein or Andy Warhol had the sort of painterly quality that prints cannot show. (God help the person who suggested that our own Arts Council should spend money on "exhibitions of good quality reproductions" or whatever it was).

The exhibition had not been scheduled for showing in Australia originally, and had toured Japan and India (it has been suggested that in areas where feeling for the United States is low, some cultural exchange often helps to smooth troubled waters—especially those around Asia at present). I can only assume that we must be considered to be a country not in need of any morale boosting at this stage of the war in South-east Asia. Some New Zealand painters did travel over for the show because the Auckland city art gallery was kept informed of the exhibition dates. Don Driver of New Plymouth had a short stay and found time to visit some of the artists and sculptors that I have seen. Another reason for the exhibition being sent here was that some sales had been assured and Sydney has acquired a giant Morris Louis a fine Albers that really has the wonderful control that some prints hint at. Melbourne has acquired a Helen Frankenthaler (109" x 93") subscribed for by the

people who attended a gala opening. The well known architect Harry Siedler (?) bought an Albers for his own private collection. I must admit that I'm very sorry that so few New Zealanders saw the show . . . however I think any one who can visit the large Sydney Nolan Retrospective Exhibition to be held on the 13th of September should do so. Again my luck held, because my late arrival here has enabled me to catch this show before I leave for home. The Exhibition is being held to honour Nolan on his 50th birthday and only the enormous amount of energy put in by Hal Missingham and his staff have made this very important show possible. I was lucky enough to see a selection of the work and the attractive catalogue is well documented.

As you can imagine I am pretty well occupied and apart from these major events I have also been to visit collections and libraries. I must have walked a hundred miles in the first week—at least it felt like that. Here in Melbourne the pace is less demanding but the galleries are miles apart. I am very fortunate to be staying with a friend of Mr Ron Quince, a member of the society. Both men lived in Melbourne and participated in the cultural life of the city some years ago. Mr Michael Wiesel is well known here in art circles and he has been very helpful in arranging visits and explaining the business of travelling on the ground and locating small galleries hidden away in upper floors of buildings. The pleasant surroundings of his home generously filled with paintings, sculpture and books on Australian art is very much appreciated by me as I have managed to learn much more about the painters of this area, through his intimate knowledge of the art scene.

In the large city store of Georges an exhibition of portraits of wellknown Australian personalities gave me a good insight into this rather neglected art form at home. The range of work was quite remarkable and included the Dobell painting of Sir Robert Menzies (he has a slight resemblance to the small bear that munches away on gum leaves here) and although I could often detect very similar styles of painting and period works to be found in New Zealand, Australian artists really do enjoy this form of painting despite the obvious problems of reconciling it with present day trends. My personal choice went to a fine crisp portrait of Burke by William Strutt (1860) . . . The explorer stares out at you with a flinty gaze and is posed in that stylish but not too cocky manner of the period. It is interesting to note that this painting is very well preserved and cared for by the restorers who fight a never ending battle against the humid and fierce conditions that prevail here in summer.

It would be pointless to make any rash generalisations about the state of Australian art at this stage of my tour (I have over half of my time to study left) but I am continually reminded of the enormous amount of pride most thinking Australians have for their own indigenous culture. The blind acceptance of home grown values is suspect. The belief in themselves and rejection of the rest of the world in some fields is a strength. Some of the more enlightened people now feel however that the period of "the Aussie you beaut philosophy" may be harmful. In artists like Nolan the idea has been allowed to develop and grow under outside influence. It is a pity that many of the gallery dealers tend to promote the safe and Aussie orientated works at the expense of work that is booming out into new, more exciting fields. The young painters turned sculptors, Michael Kitching and Ken Rienhart with their richly inventive works in plastic, aluminium and lights seemed to be much more in keeping with the spirit and grandness of the Sydney Opera House. I cannot really describe the fantastic impression that this structure has had on me, but it is certainly the finest architectural conception I have seen and to hell with the critics and money moaners. It seems that Australia can still have heroes in this day and age and I can say that looking back on the feeling in New Zealand at present, we could do with some of this rough and tumble bouncy spirit that the

Aussie has. They still have a good proportion of terrible painters but it is good to see that they have a few who are genuine artists and who are real and popular heroes to everyone . . . I tend to think back and see how we in New Zealand have not only failed to encourage art but often sadly neglected what good work we have produced. You can blame the public galleries if you like, for failing to form representative collections, but if Australia has anything to teach us, the interest and enthusiasm of the private collector is the most important factor.

Q. MacF.

MARCEL DUCHAMP RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION

Probably the most significant event in Christchurch's art world since the previous News appeared was the banning of two works in the Marcel Duchamp Retrospective Exhibition at the Robert McDougall Gallery.

Of the seventy-eight pieces in this exhibition, two were removed from public display by a City Councillor, Mr P. J. Skellerup, who is chairman of his Council's Parks and Recreation Committee — that which administers the McDougall.

The controversial pieces were "Fountain", a urinal and "Please Touch", a foam-rubber facsimile of a woman's breast.

One assumes that Cr Skellerup regarded these as individual pieces, rather than as members of a series of pieces selected with consideration and not caprice to compose an exhibition.

Whether his censorship was informed by his personal reactions, whether he believed he was anticipating outbursts of disgust from the citizenry — Pro Bono Publico, Mother of Ten, Uncle Tom and all — or whether a fusion of both, is immaterial, and we need not doubt Cr Skellerup's sincerity and integrity in acting as he did.

But, with little noticeable public fuss, it is possible to have an exhibition excised, or censored, seemingly by one man, one not the Director of the Gallery concerned and one, therefore, who need not be trained or experienced in gallery administration, nor necessarily equipped in art appreciation.

Surely it is extraordinary to find vested in the incumbent of the Parks and Recreation Committee chair the authority to interfere in things aesthetic, utterly regardless of his experience or background.

After all, the convolutions of politics are such that we could well find a blind man sitting in the chair some day.

A few of our members have often been vocal in the criticism of the McDougall, and perhaps a greater number might be equally critical, if less vocal.

But it seems that the spoken and written criticism might have been misdirected in some degree. For artists and their audiences a real danger lies in the ultimate control and channel through which the administering council exercises it.

The protesters might consider, perhaps, the whittling away of their liberties by Big Brother. The Duchamp censorship is an example of Little Brother working for our over-protected society, and the little fellow seems just as capable as the big one.—G.W.S.

BENSON & HEDGES 1968 ART AWARD

Entries for the \$3000 Benson and Hedges 1968 Art Award, the most significant, apart from being the richest, prize for art ever offered in this nation, will close on January 18.

We are delighted to be able to announce that the award paintings will be shown in our new Gallery from May 18 to June 3.

The significance is that the competitors are absolutely untrammelled.

Entry conditions simply state: "The artist entering the work judged to have the greatest merit will receive a cash award of \$3000 . . . There is no restriction on subject matter or style in which the work may be executed."

The sponsors simply seek "a notable painting or a painted relief suitable for wall display."

The judge will be named on October 4, and here is the essence of the award. The guidance which has inspired the sponsors to so stimulating a competition will, we hope, carry over to give them a judge equal to the event.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

In his long and quite interesting article in "News" No. 14, Peter Tomory makes the following curious comment. After rejoicing in the phenomenon of sell-outs of contemporary paintings in Auckland, he says:

"The popular artist can always earn his living: the serious contemporary artist can't."

Now if the contemporary artist's work is beginning to sell, they will be able to earn their living, therefore they must be getting popular: does this mean that, when they are popular, their work is no longer serious, or conversely that the work of popular artists is in no way serious?

I would like to point out that Leonardo, Michelangelo, and the Renaissance artists generally were immensely popular in their own day, and possibly more serious than any artists living now, however contemporary and impoverished. Alas, later, Turner and Constable enjoyed popularity in their lifetimes, to name only a few.

All this can't about contemporary or otherwise is only a matter of styles, and will not mean much in the long run: I would warn our artist members against critics and talkers, who make artists self-conscious and style-conscious, and have been the cause of this artificial rift, upsetting the natural and genuine growth of art in this country, as well as overseas.

Austin Deans.

Dear Sir,

I fail to understand or appreciate much of Barry Cleavin's, "A Critical Retrospect of N.Z. Painting" which appeared in your July issue.

What on earth does he mean by; (quote) "which could only result in one or two persons clutching two scores baby",

and (quote again) "nor paper to distribute concerning vision and heritage as opposed to Internationalization",

and this is merely incorrect and rude (quote) "on observing a majority of the 'Opening Night's' gluttonous entourage invited for patronage and seldom according even this".

I cannot find the words "internationalization" and "Gluttonous" in Collins Dictionary. Could he mean Glutinous?

Why do some writers about painting obscure what they want to say by using "gobbledegook". Why be rude.

Please give us more articles like those of David Graham and Tomory. More comment such as that of the Royal Academy's new look and your bright paragraphs concerning matters of interest to members. Please give us less that is obscure and muddled.

R. M. Grant.

Dear Sir,

Since quite a number of C.S.A. working members (including myself) have had landscapes hung in the current Kelliher exhibition, which is the target of some very harsh criticisms, I wondered if you would be interested in the following quotation, perhaps to be used in the newsletter.

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Charles Johnson, official lecturer at the National Gallery in London, in his book 'The Growth of Twelve Masterpieces' has some relevant remarks to make on the subject of landscapes. Quoting from page 10:

"It is arguable that all great art is in the widest sense religious. At any rate, the greatest expresses an awed delight in something larger and more universal than the individuality of the artist. Since the seventeenth century, European painters have increasingly expressed this reverence for forces outside themselves, less by illustrating Christian themes and more by the representation of trees and mountains, fields and skies. In modern times in fact the branch of pictorial art that comes nearest to being a universal language is landscape . . . The subject, then, of great art is something that the artist shares or wishes to share with as wide as possible a public. In his means of expressing it he also involuntarily and inevitably expresses something of his own individual idiosyncrasy; and this aspect of his art rightly appeals to the lover of pictures as much as the universal message; but the universality of the message, not the idiosyncrasy, is the gauge of an artist's greatness."

I feel sure that this quotation would be of some satisfaction to those who dislike so much of what is classed as art today, and who refuse to be conditioned into accepting and admiring the results of subconscious dredgings or aimless daubings, indistinguishable from that of monkeys let loose with brushes and paints.

(Mrs) Zita Saunders.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society Extends a Welcome to these New Members:

Mr S. E. Boanas	Mrs M. McGilvray
Mr P. A. Derrett	Mrs M. Morrison
Engineering School	Mr R. G. A. Nicholl
Mrs A. C. Felton	Mr S. A. la Roche
Mrs L. Greenaway	Mr K. W. Scott
Mrs M. T. Grofski	Miss P. M. Smerdon
Mrs R. W. Halliday	Mr Julian Sullivan
Mr J. M. Henderson	Mrs M. Thomas
Mr P. D. A. Hinchliff	Mrs Eliza Thompson
Miss C. P. Kells	Mrs Janice Wallis
Mr W. R. Kennedy	Mrs M. K. Flood
Mrs Vera Mackay	

EXHIBITIONS AND COMPETITIONS

Marlborough Art Society Receiving Day, September 8. Annual Exhibition.

Invercargill Art Gallery Society Exhibition. Receiving Day, September 21.

New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts Annual Exhibition. Receiving Day, October 3.

Nelson Suter Art Society Spring Exhibition. Last receiving day, October 6, 1967.

Benson and Hedges Art Award. Receiving Day, January 18, 1968.

IN THE GALLERY

September 16: Associate Members' Exhibition (Receiving Day, September 6).

October 7-22: Combined Artists Exhibition.

October 25-November 12: Group Show.

November 25-December 17: Summer Show (Receiving Day, November 15).

COMBINED ARTISTS' EXHIBITION

The artists who will show in the second part of the Combined Artists' Exhibition, from October 7 to 22, are:

Mrs Atkins	Mr R. Leonard
Mr David Cheer	Mrs Lill
Mrs Crothall	Mr R. D. Morgan
Mrs Olive Elsom	Mrs Muschamp
Mrs Hunt	Miss S. Thomson
Mrs Vera Jamieson	Mrs D. E. Smith
Mr J. Jansen	Mr Basil Wilson
Miss Pauline Knight	

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

There are still a few subscriptions outstanding. It will be appreciated if members affected will give this matter their early attention as our financial year ends 30th September.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

This newsletter may have been re-directed to reach you. If so would you be so kind as to notify the office as soon as possible.

An anonymous donor has given us \$1000 towards the new gallery, for debt redemption.

UNENDING FERTILITY OF PICASSO'S SCULPTURE

by Edward Lucie-Smith, a leading British art critic

The recent exhibition of Picasso's sculpture at London's Tate Gallery is the first large-scale exhibition of his work in this medium to have been seen outside France. The show is now in New York. It has been admirably arranged by Sir Roland Penrose, who has also been responsible for the catalogue.

Such an exhibition is naturally an event. Picasso's reputation has soared to immense heights—in fact, Michelangelo is the only other artist who is recorded as having enjoyed such universal fame in his own lifetime.

The comparison which this suggests is an instructive one. Michelangelo, like Picasso, was a kind of magician. He had not only genius, but a charisma which fascinated and overawed his contemporaries. And, where these contemporaries were concerned, the titanic struggles of Michelangelo's old age were very much part of the legend. Michelangelo's inability to satisfy himself, his tendency to spoil a piece on which he had laboured for years (the Randanini Pieta, for example)—these were constantly remarked upon.

Power Of Creativity

Picasso is almost the direct opposite. In his old age, he has shown an unending fertility of invention. That block, or resistance, to the power of creativity which most artists seem to feel within themselves is not present, apparently, in the aged Picasso. The show at the Tate is a celebration of this fertility. One sees in it how Picasso manages to turn everything to good advantage.

Asked to make some dolls for his daughter Maia, he constructs out of odds and ends of wood and cloth creatures which are satisfactory playthings, and also something more. They have some of the fascination of the fetishes made in Africa. They point forward, too, to that "Art of Assemblage" which was so much to engage the attention of artists after World War II.

Picasso himself returns to the idea of assemblage

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in the metamorphic sculptures made in the forties and early fifties — bull's head conjured into being from a bicycle saddle and handle-bars, a woman pushing a pram from an extraordinary collection of objects borrowed from various junk-heaps.

Powerful Modelling

But Picasso is no purist about techniques. Sculptures will combine various methods to make a single and convincing whole. The "Baboon and Young" of 1952 strikes the spectator by its powerful, almost brutal, modelling. It is not until he examines it more closely that he realises that the head is made of two toy cars stuck together. The "Pregnant Woman" has jars for breasts and belly, the goat illustrated here has a body made from a sagging old basket.



A goat in bronze by Picasso, one of many provocative sculptures in the large-scale exhibition of his work at the Tate Gallery, London.

Such transformations show Picasso's amazing opportunism, his quickness of eye and wit. This faculty is so much part of him that very often, having discovered a subject, he cannot leave it alone until he has created many variations on the original theme. This is true, for instance, of the many owls made at the Vallauris pottery, and of the flocks of sheet-metal animals, created by the cutting and folding of the material.

This practice also appears in Picasso's recent painting, and perhaps less satisfactorily. There is a long set of variations on Delacroix's "Women of Algiers", for example, and another on the "Las Meninas" of Velazquez. Looking at Picasso's owls, one is reminded not of Michelangelo, but of G. B. Tiepolo. Indeed, the experience of walking through the exhibition at the Tate Gallery is very much like that of looking through a large album of drawings by Tiepolo.

Characteristically, many of these will be variations upon the same theme, a saint in glory, for example, or the Magi bringing their gifts to the Child. Tiepolo intended them as a display of virtuosity, and we still take them as such; we realise that if we look at each drawing on its own, something is lost, that some part of the meaning is missing.

Complete Survey of Sculpture

And this, I think, is what one feels about this complete (or nearly complete) survey of Picasso's sculpture. It is the show itself which is greater than the sum of individual items. The fact that the emphasis lies so heavily upon the later part of Picasso's career, and in particular on what he has

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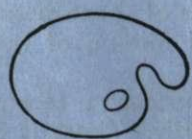


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done since World War II, helps to reinforce this impression. The greater density of the Cubist constructions does not wholly outweigh the thinness of some of the rest. This is not to say that there is an absence of masterpieces. The large erotic heads of Marie-Therese Walter made in the thirties are some of the greatest sculpture of the century. The "Man with a sheep" made for the town-square in Vallauris is not far behind.

Yet I do not think one can give such high praise to the sheet-metal constructions, dazzlingly inventive as most of these are. The constructions of this kind, which are among the most recent of the sculptures, seem to me to pinpoint the dilemma in which Picasso now finds himself. They would, I suspect, be more logical if they were made in paper—the instantaneous inspirations of the moment, laying no claim to permanence, ready to be replaced by something else the moment after. When we ask ourselves the inevitable question: "Will Picasso last?" we have to remember that in some ways his talent is inimical to the whole idea of permanence — our attention is fixed upon the man as much as upon his products.

Michelangelo persuaded men that they could be almost divine. Picasso is constantly reminding them that they are mortal. It makes him a deeply paradoxical artist.

REDCLIFFE ART CONTEST, BRISBANE

Our congratulations to Mrs Vy Elsom who won the water Colour "Free Subject" section of this competition, which was judged by Mr William Dargie. Mrs Elsom sent over 3 paintings all of which were hung in a selection of 267 out of 454 entries. Other Society Members who entered were Mr Austin Deans, Miss Audrey Durrant and Mrs Olive Elsom.

ART CAN'T BE TAUGHT

This is the final of three articles by Mr P. A. Tomory.

They first appeared in the "Listener" in 1964, and we are indebted both to the Editor of the "Listener" (Mr M. H. Holcroft) and to Mr Tomory for permission to use them.

Mr Tomory, former Director of the Auckland City Art Gallery and now senior lecturer in art history at Elam School of Art, was last recipient of the Society's Silver Medal for his lively and vigorous services to art in New Zealand.

I have some decided views about child art and they're not all favourable. What the good new art teaching is doing is making children more alive to their surroundings. One teacher in Auckland, for example, spends a lot of time introducing the children to textures, not necessarily done in paint, but used to build up compositions. Wherever this might lead artistically, it is at least producing in the child a sensitivity towards textural surfaces.

Children can be taught painting, and it's useful from the age of 7 to about 10 as a means of expression when their vocabulary is not developed enough to express themselves in words. But after that I've never seen anything by a child that I have not found exceptionally dreary, an aping of adult art without its maturity and sophistication. They are usually struggling to achieve a third dimension. At 14 or 15 they are almost literally wasting their time.

I have had quite a lot to do with art students, including the first-year art student who is the product of the average secondary school. Many of them exhibited absolutely no interest in art, and few of them had any capacity in doing it. Not until their third year did they start producing anything that showed any promise. In their mental attitude towards art one had to break down something like a 60 per cent solid Philistinism.

In Europe if you talk about Matisse to a first-year university student, he knows about Matisse and he knows the pictures he has painted. But if you say

"Matisse" in New Zealand, or even in England they are likely to think it is some new kind of mattress. There is not even a glimmer of recognition. You can even mention Cezanne to New Zealand art students and find perhaps two who have actually heard of him. This is one of the great founders of twentieth-century painting.

Attitudes to painting could be improved, I think, by secondary school students — as in Europe — being given lectures in art history and appreciation. These give them a background of what art is — not the art they produce, but what much more important artists produce. This fits them much more properly for the role of spectator when they come out into the world, and after all 98 per cent of them are going to be spectators. Even the two per cent, perhaps, who become artists are at least given a proper grounding.

By and large I think that everybody is a creative artist, but it never comes to anything with most because they lack the willpower to produce artistic work. However, I also think it is a quaint, nineteenth-century notion that art can be taught. It is just not true. What the art school can do is teach techniques or at least put them in the way of any person with a creative bent; it can give a background of art history; and it can provide a sympathetic environment in which an artist's own capacity can flower and grow.

In the intelligently run art school, the person with a creative bent shouldn't feel confined. And both the art schools in New Zealand are intelligently run; they are good within their own terms. If anybody does feel choked or confined, obviously he leaves. I think this happens in all the media: the creative artist is a law unto himself; he must find his own part. It is an interesting fact that neither McCahon nor Woollaston had more than a few months of formal tuition.

An informed public also helps to produce a professional mastery of technique. Where an artist as a social animal was aware, as Frances Hodgkins used to write in her letters, that the atmosphere in New Zealand was entirely hostile, nobody could paint or write with the unselfconscious strength possible in a friendly society. What has happened in the past 10 to 15 years is that the artist feels no longer that he is painting in a hostile country, but that he is painting in one which is warm or at least warming up. This is obviously producing better art.

Working in a gallery, obviously I am extremely interested in the onlooker. I remember saying to the Auckland Society of Arts when I first arrived in New Zealand that I was primarily concerned with building an audience for the visual arts rather than in supporting the local artist. This is not to say that I don't support the local artist, but there is an attitude that it is the artist who counts. The artist cannot count at all unless people are going to look at his work.

My endeavour in Auckland has been to provide a richly varied collection, bringing in overseas exhibitions, so that an audience is trained for the local product. And this has been borne out. Seven or eight years ago, none of the artists who have recently been selling in Auckland would have sold a thing. It is not done of course by one gallery; it is a general dissemination of exhibitions; and we now have a highly-trained audience. They will hardly jib at anything. There is the occasional outburst, but by and large they are critical and their judgment is firmly based on things they have seen.

When first I came to New Zealand I was horrified by the complete unevenness of judgment. I could ask five different people and get five different lists of painters to look at. This is not true now. We have reached the stage where three persons of quite different tastes can write lists of artists they think should be represented in an exhibition abroad and their lists will be almost identical.

This has in fact just been done, and this is how it should be. Imagine the situation if we had this unevenness of judgment in New Zealand literature. People could be really worried about whether Sylvia

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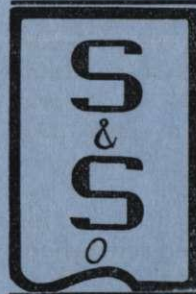
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Ashton-Warner was a novelist or not! But this was the case with painting. There were open denials that X was a painter at all; others claimed that X was the painter.

Even now it is quite serious, I think, that painting of this century is not properly shown in any gallery but Auckland's. It is as though somebody interested in New Zealand poetry were to find that certain New Zealand libraries did not stock it at all. Auckland's is the only art collection that could be called representative. We have ten Woollastons, for example, and the National Gallery has none at all. The MacDougall Gallery in Christchurch has one; Dunedin has none. Yet Woollaston is now 55 and has been an established painter for 10 or 15 years.

Although we tour an exhibition of New Zealand painting round the country, it is only once a year. For three weeks somebody in, say, Timaru can go and look at what is being done, but for the rest of the year there is nothing. He is not even reminded by his local gallery of what is going on. I notice this particularly because I am in Christchurch and Wellington regularly and it is almost like going to another country.

Of course the galleries have had the occasional gift of a contemporary painting, and, looking ahead, there are people who have built up fairly sizeable collections. The most outstanding donation at present is the Charlton Edgar collection at the Hocken Library in Dunedin. He bought a thousand or two thousand pounds worth of contemporary New Zealand paintings in memory of his wife. This is one act of benefaction, and we are obviously going to have more of this in the next few decades.

But you can go into a gallery like the National Gallery in Wellington or the gallery in Dunedin and see very little which tells anything about what is going on in the country. This was remarked on by Nikolav Pevsner and Herbert Read when they were here. It will change, but at the moment it is creating an odd kind of audience: a very informed one in Auckland; a few people in Wellington and Christchurch. The public galleries could be doing much more to break down the old New Zealand snobbery that anything good must be done overseas. Good New Zealand painting can stand on its own with any overseas product: the more so at home because of its regional appeal.

In London, the work of a young artist having his first exhibition I would expect to be priced somewhere between £30 and £60, and this is largely the case here, although of course you have to take size into account. Some artists ask prices that are quite absurd in relation to (a) other artists much better than they are, and (b) the market as a whole. But prices generally are not unreasonable here, and sometimes I think they are a little under what they should be. That is, thinking in terms of the price of a painting and the price of a good refrigerator.

People say, "How can I afford to buy a painting?" and I say "Don't replace your old motor mower or your old refrigerator, and buy a painting. It's easy." But of course those who ask are generally people who are not going to buy a painting anyway.

In building an audience there is a place for the Adult Education lecture and the lunchtime talk, but I think the main thing is providing the painting for people to look at. At Auckland, for instance, we have one gallery hung entirely with New Zealand contemporary most of the time. Pictures have been up on the walls there for five or six years, and it is extraordinary the people who come in now who five years ago were saying "I can't understand that" and now find it their favourite picture. This is simply because they have been made to look at it; it has always been there; it has become as familiar as the lamp-post outside their house.

THE END

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